



## Washington State Office of Civil Legal Aid

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### SOURCES SOUGHT/REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

#### **2003 WASHINGTON STATE CIVIL LEGAL NEEDS STUDY UPDATE** **SURVEY DESIGN, SAMPLING, AND COMPUTER ASSISTED PERSONAL INTERVIEWING (CAPI)** **DATA COLLECTION CONTRACTOR**

##### **General Information:**

This is a SOURCES SOUGHT/REQUEST FOR INFORMATION NOTICE to determine the availability of potential survey services provider(s). This announcement is a Request for Information (RFI) for planning purposes only.

##### **Overview:**

The Washington State Office of Civil Legal Aid (OCLA) is seeking creative and innovative approaches towards efficient and informed update of the [2003 Washington State Civil Legal Needs Study](#) (2003 CLNS). With this RFI, OCLA hereby solicits information from potential research organizations and institutions on proposed methodological approaches and estimated expenses associated with the design and approach to acquisition and analysis of data relating to civil (non-criminal) legal problems experienced by low income residents of Washington State.

Please be advised that **this is not a formal Request for Proposals**. Those who respond will not be submitting a bid for contracted services, and formal contracting rules do not apply to this Request for Information. Information generated from responses to this inquiry will be used to frame a formal RFP in the coming months.

The Office of Civil Legal Aid (OCLA) is an independent judicial branch agency that contracts for and oversees the delivery of civil legal aid services by qualified legal aid providers. Under RCW 2.53.020, OCLA is responsible for periodically assessing and reporting on the status of access to the justice system for individuals eligible for state-funded civil legal aid services. OCLA is the lead agency on this project.

The Washington State Center for Court Research (WSCCR) is the research arm of the Administrative Office of the Courts. WSCCR was established by order of the Washington Supreme Court to, among other things, provide objective and informed research for the judicial branch. WSCCR's research agenda is established and overseen by an Advisory Board appointed by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

## **Background: The 2003 Civil Legal Needs Study**

In September 2003, the Washington Supreme Court's Task Force on Civil Equal Justice Funding published the first ever assessment of unmet civil legal needs of low and moderate income Washingtonians. The [2003 Civil Legal Needs Study](#) was the product of three years of coordinated effort on the part of many organizations operating under the Task Force's umbrella.

The Study chronicled the prevalence and substance of the civil legal problems experienced by low and moderate income people, commonalities and differences between the problems experienced by members of different demographic groups and subgroups, commonalities and differences between problems experienced by low and moderate income households, the degree to which legal assistance was available to those experiencing civil legal problems, and the impact that civil legal assistance (and the lack thereof) had on an individual's ability to effectively resolve their legal problem(s) and on their acceptance and respect for the civil justice system as a whole.

The 2003 Civil Legal Needs Study consisted of three components: (1) a field study of 1333 individual low income responders across the state; (2) a random digit telephone study (land lines) of 810 low and moderate income respondents; and (3) a written survey of stakeholders groups and organizations (bench, bar, courthouse facilitators, social and human services providers, legal aid organizations, etc.). The field study was coordinated through the Department of Sociology at Portland State University. The telephone survey was conducted by the Social and Economic Research Services Center at Washington State University. The stakeholder survey was conducted by Task Force staff. Information was gathered from study participants from July 2002 through February 2003. The CLNS was published in September 2003.

Among other things, the 2003 CLNS found:

1. More than three-quarters of all low income households experienced at least one civil legal problem for which legal help was indicated. Of these, nearly nine of every ten were unable to obtain the civil legal help they needed.
2. Problems involving housing, family relationships, employment, consumer issues and access to health care and public benefits were most prevalent, making up a combined 78% of all civil legal problems experienced by low income households. Issues involving discrimination and disparate treatment appeared in a substantial percentage of legal problems in the areas of employment, health, access to public and municipal services, consumer issues and housing.
3. Legal help was most available for individuals with family-related legal problems (nearly 30%), and was least available for individuals with civil legal problems

- involving housing (9.8%), employment (7.5%), health care (5.1%) and the availability of public and municipal services (3.3%).
4. Farmworkers, individuals with disabilities, Native Americans, persons living in long term care facilities and homeless individuals were least likely to secure civil legal help, while seniors, domestic violence survivors and recent immigrants were most able to secure legal help. No group was able to secure legal help more than 25% of the time.
  5. Women and children experienced substantially more civil legal problems than the general population. Members of particular demographic groups experienced disproportionately more of certain types of legal problems than the general population.
  6. Legal assistance made a difference. Those unable to get legal help ended up living with the consequences of the legal problem and were dissatisfied with the outcome of the situation in 81% of cases. Those able to secure legal help were satisfied with the outcome in their cases 61% of the time. Fifty-one percent of those unable to get legal help had a “very negative” view of the justice system, while only 14% of those who were able to get help held the same view. Conversely, 54% of those who got civil legal help had a positive view of the justice system, while only 16% of those who were unable to get help felt the same way.

### **The 2012 Civil Legal Needs Scoping Group**

The data gathering for the 2003 CLNS occurred during 2002-2003. In the ten years since there have been substantial changes in the demographics of low income individuals and families, the substantive laws and legal frameworks that affect low income people, governmental policies affecting the poor and technology-based practices that adversely affect the ability of low income individuals to access necessary services and secure health care, housing, credit and employment. Like the rest of the Nation, Washington State was hit hard by the Great Recession of 2008-09 and the catastrophic loss of jobs which drew hundreds of thousands of residents into the ranks of the poor. The state’s housing markets collapsed, resulting in a foreclosure crisis fueled in part by high risk, predatory lending and perpetuated by across-the-board declines in pre-recession housing values. New legal problems emerged, many of which were experienced by individuals and families who, until the Great Recession, had been hard working members of the middle class.

During the summer and fall of 2012, OCLA convened a 16-person Civil Legal Needs Scoping Group to explore (a) whether it was necessary to conduct a new or updated assessment of the civil legal needs of low income people and, if so, (b) the focus, scope and methodology that should be employed in undertaking such an assessment. This Civil Legal Needs Scoping Group issued its [Report and Recommendations](#) on December 24, 2012. The Scoping Group determined that it is imperative to update our understanding of the nature, gravity and consequences of legal problems that low income people face in Washington State, and that the 2003 Civil Legal Needs Study should serve as the baseline reference point for such an update.

The Scoping Group outlined the principal objectives of the update effort as:

1. Expand understanding of the nature, gravity and consequences of legal problems that low-income people face in Washington State
2. Document the legal barriers that prevent low-income individuals, families and communities from successfully participating in society
3. Identify new civil legal problems that have emerged since the 2003 study and assess the impact of those problems on low income individuals and families
4. Document the value (including economic value) to low income individuals, families and communities resulting from the ability to secure civil legal aid
5. Document the impact of changes in funding for civil legal aid services on the capacity of Washington State's civil legal aid delivery system to meet the civil needs of low income individuals and families since the 2003 Civil Legal Needs Study
6. Serve as a basis for further discussion and strategic direction for legal aid delivery system planners, providers of civil legal aid services and other community-based organizations
7. Identify areas of compelling legal problems to which legal authority to use state-appropriated funds should be expanded

The Scoping Group recommended that the update be conducted through the coordinated efforts of the Washington State Office of Civil Legal Aid and the Washington State Center for Court Research, working under a bipartisan, blue ribbon panel co-chaired by a Supreme Court Justice, a current or recent member of the bipartisan Civil Legal Aid Oversight Committee and a representative of the Supreme Court's Access to Justice Board

Consistent with the recommendations of the Civil Legal Needs Scoping Group, a 2014 Civil Legal Needs Update Committee (Update Committee) has been created. The Update Committee is chaired by Washington Supreme Court Justice Charles Wiggins, and consists of a number of elected and appointed officials representing a diverse spectrum of entities with a strong interest in understanding the substance, prevalence and implications of legal problems experienced by low income Washingtonians. The Update Committee will approve the engagement of an institutional research partner, review and approve a data collection plan, assist in the development of the research instruments and outreach strategies, oversee execution of the data collection plan, and provide guidance and oversight on data analysis and presentation.

## Contours of the Current Request for Information

OCLA and WSCCR seek to partner with research institutions and organizations that have relevant experience and can provide needed services for data collection, including focus group facilitation and survey administration by an interview staff that is diverse (with regard to age, race, sex, Spanish language fluency), pilot testing of survey instruments, experience with telephone and in-person surveys and CATI software, sample design, and working with hard-to-reach populations.

As outlined in the Scoping Group report, a two-stage approach is planned. The first phase will involve a series of community-based focus groups. These will be held in locations around the state. Focus group sites and outreach for focus group meetings will be tailored to secure the involvement of representative numbers of low income people and those involved in the provision of social and human services to diverse groups and communities of low income people. Efforts will be made to ensure that participation reflects the diversity of the low income communities within the geographic areas where the focus groups are conducted.

Information obtained during the focus groups will be synthesized and used to inform the development of a more detailed revised survey instrument to be administered through interviews with individual low income people in the second phase of the data gathering process. The administration of this survey will be designed to provide statistically significant information for the low income population in general and some or all of the distinct subgroups identified on page 12 of the Scoping Group Report.

Both focus group and individualized survey data collection will work with respondents who are at or below 200% of the federal poverty level (FPL), with at least one-half of the survey sample below 150% FPL.

### Specific Information Requested:

Outlines and associated cost-estimates are requested detailing:

1. The proposed approach to conducting the Phase I focus groups
2. Synthesis of information received from focus group participants
3. Development of a revised survey instrument for use in the Phase II individual interviews
4. Designing and conducting the individual interviews so that representative samples are obtained from key demographic sub-groups
5. Analysis and presentation of the Phase II data

Information submitted in response to this RFI should serve the principal objectives of this effort (*Scoping Group Report* at 10-11), and address the core areas of study focus (*Id.* at 11-12). At the very least, we ask that responses detail (a) suggested uses of face-to-face interviews,

telephone interviews, computerized survey instruments and the like, (b) suggested outreach strategies designed to ensure diversity of engagement that is representative of the target population and sub-populations, and (c) suggested approaches to sampling design and analysis to support statistically valid inferences about the population and sub-populations surveyed.

In addition to the questions outlined above, OCLA requests that respondents specifically address each question identified below. In general, while this RFI is not a request for a technical proposal, respondents should provide enough information for OCLA to make a determination as to a respondent's capability to perform the same or similar work.

1. General Business Information
  - a. Organization / Company Name
  - b. Organization / Company Address
  - c. Point of Contact - Name, Phone and Email address
  - d. Point of contact, phone and email address of individuals who can corroborate the demonstrated capabilities identified in the responses.
  - e. Subcontractors and Teaming Arrangements -- Teaming arrangements are encouraged. Teams should be identified with the roles for each entity listed for each capability. If a teaming arrangement is contemplated, the response should also include the above-cited information (1(a)-(d)) for each entity on the proposed team.
2. Your experience in recruiting and hosting community-level focus groups to gather information about current and recent experiences resulting in significant problems related to housing, education, employment, health care, and other topics of relevance to low-income populations.
3. Your experience with questionnaire design (including item design) and testing for use with vulnerable and hard-to-reach populations, including the aged (over age 65), disabled, Native American, immigrant, youth and homeless populations.
4. Your knowledge and experience studying the social, economic, legal and other challenges faced by low-income or other disadvantaged individuals.
5. Your experience with the use of complex statistical sampling techniques to develop a sampling design that ensures maximum state representativeness at best value; and your experience in developing sample weights and variance estimation techniques.
6. Your experience with survey techniques (mail, computer assisted telephone, personal, and web interviewing (CATI, CAPI, and CAWI)) that can be used to ensure cost-effective and representative response collection. This should include your anticipated response rate for each technique and the strategies you have used to achieve the stated response rates.
7. A statement of whether you, and/or proposed teaming partners, maintain statisticians and/or survey research methodologists at the PhD level.
8. A description of comparable current or past projects where your organization has been successful in implementing surveys of low-income populations and populations with Spanish as a preferred language.

## **Instructions/Requirements for Submitting RFI Responses to CMS:**

Interested parties having the capability and expertise necessary to perform the stated requirements, may submit capability statements via email to [jim.bamberger@ocla.wa.gov](mailto:jim.bamberger@ocla.wa.gov). Email responses on or before **June 7, 2013 at 10:00 AM PDT**. Please limit responses to no more than 10 pages total (excluding references and appendices). Responses shall be submitted in a Word 2007 or Adobe PDF document.

## **Other Information:**

1. **Proprietary Information and Disclaimers:** All transmitted information marked proprietary shall be treated as such. Therefore, respondents should identify any proprietary information in their RFI responses. Information submitted in response to this RFI will be used at the discretion of OCLA. Materials designated as proprietary will neither be distributed, nor discussed with any other organization or business. Further, the information submitted will remain confidential insofar as permitted by law. OCLA reserves the right to utilize any non-proprietary technical information in the anticipated statement of work or solicitation.
2. Respondents should be aware that this RFI is for market research purposes only and any responses submitted do not constitute a commitment by OCLA to treat any offer more or less favorably in any anticipated forthcoming solicitation and/or ultimate award.
3. Responses to the RFI are not offers and cannot be accepted by OCLA to form a binding contract. OCLA does not intend to award a contract on the basis of this RFI, or to otherwise pay for the information solicited. No reimbursement for costs will be made associated with providing information in response to this RFI or follow-up information request.
4. Responses to the RFI will not be returned and will not be accepted after the due date. All communications shall be by email.
5. Respondents may be contacted for further information regarding the information set forth in their responses. This not being a solicitation of bids, there will be no award or other notification of results.

## **Questions:**

Please direct questions related to this RFI to:

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